

P 120824Z OCT 01  
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7224  
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GABORONE 003343

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/11/11

TAGS: PREL PTER BC

SUBJECT: TFUS01: GOB SUPPORTS COALITION STRIKES AGAINST THE TALIBAN

REF: A) STATE 169975 B) STATE 175419

CLASSIFIED BY DCM LESLIE BASSETT FOR REASONS 1.5 (B)(D)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS BY THE GOB TO DATE HAVE BEEN FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF USG ACTIONS AGAINST TALIBAN MILITARY TARGETS. IN A 10/11 MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR, MFA PERMANENT SECRETARY ERNEST MPOFU DEFENDED A MORE CAUTIOUS APPROACH IN ORDER TO AVOID EXTREMIST RETALIATION AGAINST BOTSWANA'S MISSIONS ABROAD, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY CONCEDED THAT HIS MINISTER'S POLICY WAS TO SUPPORT THE USG. MPOFU ALSO REPORTED THE CONVOCATION OF AN AD-HOC COMMISSION TO COORDINATE GOB ACTIONS AGAINST TERRORISM. END SUMMARY.

INITIAL REACTIONS FULLY SUPPORTIVE

¶12. (C) ON OCTOBER 8 VP IAN KHAMA PHONED THE AMBASSADOR TO CONVEY HIS PERSONAL SUPPORT FOR THE COALITION EFFORT AGAINST THE TALIBAN. HE APPLAUDED THE DECISION TO ACT, ACCEPTED INDICATIONS THAT USAMA BIN LADEN WAS THE PERPETRATOR, AND WISHED THE USG SUCCESS IN CARRYING OUT THE ENGAGEMENT. ASKED IF HE WOULD MAKE HIS SUPPORT PUBLIC, HOWEVER, KHAMA DEMURRED, SUGGESTING THIS WAS AN ISSUE FOR THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND NOTING THAT BOTSWANA TENDS TO TAKE A LOW PROFILE. THAT "DOESN'T MEAN IN ANY WAY WE'RE NOT SUPPORTIVE," HE ADDED.

¶13. (U) OCTOBER 10 PRESS QUOTED FOREIGN MINISTER MERAFHE OFFERING HIS COUNTRY'S FULL SUPPORT FOR THE U.S.-LED STRIKES AGAINST THE TALIBAN. HE NOTED THE ACTION WAS NOT PREMATURE, AS THOSE WHO HARBORED THE PERPETRATORS OF THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS HAD BEEN GIVEN AMPLE TIME TO SURRENDER BIN LADEN AND HIS SUPPORTERS. MERAFHE ONCE AGAINST CHARACTERIZED THE SEPTEMBER 11 TRAGEDY AS AN ATTACK ON HUMANITY AS A WHOLE.

MOVING PAST BUREAUCRATIC DOUBTS

¶14. (C) ON OCTOBER 11 MFA PERMANENT SECRETARY ERNEST MPOFU REQUESTED A MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS GOB RESPONSES TO THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS. HE PROVIDED THE AMBASSADOR WITH THE STATEMENT WHICH HAD SERVED AS THE BASIS FOR MERAFHE'S REMARKS. THE EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS DOCUMENT REGRETS THAT AFGHANISTAN DID NOT SURRENDER THE SUSPECTED PERPETRATORS, HOPES THAT USG ACTIONS ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE UN CHARTER, AND EXPRESSES THE VIEW THAT THE ATTACKS SHOULD BE OF MINIMAL DURATION. MPOFU DEFENDED THE WEAK STATEMENT AS A NECESSARY HEDGE TO AVOID PROVOKING EXTREMIST GROUPS. BOTSWANA'S MISSIONS WORLDWIDE ARE NOT SECURE, HE POINTED OUT. IN CAPE TOWN THAT DAY, MPOFU ADDED, THERE WAS A DEMONSTRATION AT THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION, CO-LOCATED IN THE SAME BUILDING AS THE BOTSWANA MISSION. THE GOB LACKS THE RESOURCES TO SECURE ITS OFFICIALS AND PREMISES; IT CANNOT AFFORD TO PROVOKE EXTREMIST REACTIONS.

¶15. (C) PRESSED BY THE AMBASSADOR, MPOFU CONCEDED THAT THE WEAKER STATEMENT WAS SUPERSEDED BY THE MINISTER'S STRONG SUPPORT OF THE USG STRIKES AGAINST THE TALIBAN. THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING SUCH SUPPORT. HE PROVIDED COPIES OF A LETTER HE WROTE TO PRESIDENT MOGAE 10/9 (AS A COVER TO PRESIDENT BUSH'S REPLY TO PRESIDENT MOGAE'S LETTER OF CONDOLENCE) WHICH URGED THE GOB TO REMAIN PUBLICLY SUPPORTIVE. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO PROVIDED THE TEXT OF HIS 10/10 STATEMENT TO THE PRESS WHICH

ARGUED THE USG CASE AND CALLED FOR BROAD SUPPORT FROM BOTSWANA.

FIRST COORDINATED ACTIONS FROM GOB ON TERRORISM

¶6. (C) MPOFU REPORTED THAT HE HAD RECENTLY CONVOKED AN AD-HOC COMMISSION TO COORDINATE GOB RESPONSES TO TERRORISM AND ITS FULFILLMENT OF ITS INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS. THE COMMISSION INCLUDES THE BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE, THE POLICE (INCLUDING ITS INTELLIGENCE AGENCY), CUSTOMS, IMMIGRATION, THE CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY, THE BANK OF BOTSWANA, AND THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT. EACH AGENCY HAD BEEN TASKED WITH SPECIFIC ISSUES WHICH WERE TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE NEAR TERM; SEVERAL SUBCOMMITTEES LOOKING AT TRANSPORTATION, AIRPORT ACCESS, AND FINANCIAL ISSUES WERE ALSO CREATED. MPOFU WAS CONFIDENT THIS MECHANISM WOULD ALLOW BOTSWANA TO REPORT FULL COMPLIANCE WITH UNSCR 1373 AS WELL AS ITS OTHER INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS. IT WOULD ALSO IDENTIFY ANY LOOPHOLES THAT NEEDED TO BE FILLED. HE OFFERED TO GIVE US REGULAR UPDATES ON THE COMMISSION'S PROGRESS.

COOL ON REGIONAL EFFORTS

¶7. (C) THE AMBASSADOR QUERIED MPOFU ABOUT POSSIBLE REGIONAL INITIATIVES, PERHAPS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SADC. MPOFU SUGGESTED THAT FINANCIAL TRACKING EFFORTS WITHIN THE REGION ASSUMED THAT FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS WERE PLENTIFUL -- IN FACT BOTSWANA TRANSACTED PRIMARILY WITH SOUTH AFRICA. HE SUGGESTED THAT SADC MIGHT BEST MOBILIZE ITSELF ON THE FRINGES OF AN UPCOMING MEETING OF THE AD-HOC COMMISSION ON UNITA SANCTIONS; THE SAME PLAYERS WOULD LIKELY DISCUSS THE REPERCUSSIONS OF SEPTEMBER 11.

¶8. (C) MPOFU ALSO NOTED THE GOB HAD RECEIVED AN INVITATION FOR A SUMMIT IN DAKAR NEXT WEEK TO DISCUSS TERRORISM IN AFRICA. HIS VIEW WAS THAT THE PROPOSAL WAS NOT WELL-DEFINED, AND THE GOB WOULD LIKELY NOT ATTEND. HE UNDERSTOOD OTHER AFRICAN NATIONS WERE ALSO SKEPTICAL. MPOFU averred that President Wade's real purpose was to focus on terrorism inside Senegal and other parts of Africa.

¶9. (C) COMMENT: MPOFU, THE HIGHEST-RANKING CAREER DIPLOMAT IN THE BOTSWANA FOREIGN SERVICE, IS ALSO THE MOST CAUTIOUS. IT IS DISAPPOINTING THAT THE TALKING POINTS FOR MINISTER MERAFHE WERE SO WEAK; IT IS HEARTENING THAT HE MOVED READILY PAST THEM TO FULLY SUPPORT USG ACTIONS.

LANGE